

Employees Killed in the Line of Duty Honored at Memorial Dedication

By Melissa Cook

On Thursday, May 24, 2001, an Employee Memorial was dedicated at the headquarters complex of the Louisiana Department of Public Safety and Corrections, Corrections Services. It stands as a permanent memorial to employees who have given their lives in the line of duty. "Today represents a career accomplishment for those of us who first imagined such a memorial, then saw it erected," Secretary Richard L. Stalder said. "These people made the ultimate sacrifice on behalf of the department and the state. Their lives and their deaths remind us of the collective call to duty that our staff answers every day to preserve the safety of the citizens of our state."

Following the invocation and laying of wreaths, Elayn Hunt Correctional Center warden C.M. Lensing, president of the Louisiana Association of Wardens (LAWS), addressed those gathered. "It is one of the high points of my career to have been involved in the planning, construction, and dedication of this memorial, a permanent and lasting reminder of the individuals who sacrificed their lives, many at a very young age, to serve and protect. This memorial stands as a reminder of how serious our business can be."

Then Secretary Stalder and Warden Lensing unveiled one of the three broad tablets that rise above the memorial's curving brick walls. On it were eight memorial plaques acknowledging those individuals who lost their lives in the performance of their duties.

Captain Herman Harris, C. Paul Phelps Correctional Center (PCC), was fatally injured on May 4, 2000, when the horse he was riding bolted toward the horse barn, then veered and threw him.

Captain David C. Knapps, Louisiana State Penitentiary (LSP), was killed on December 28, 1999, when he refused to surrender his keys to a group of inmates trying to escape from Camp D.

Probation and Parole Officer David Seymour, New Orleans West Probation and Parole District, was accidentally shot on August 27, 1996, during a training exercise at the State Police Academy simulating high-risk traffic stops.

Probation and Parole Specialist Gerald Wayne "Jerry" Moberly, Natchitoches Probation and Parole District, was shot by a parolee on October 23, 1990, after Mr. Moberly and a police officer went to the parolee's house to arrest him on two warrants and a parole violation.

Walter D. Krouskup, Louisiana Training Institute in Monroe (now Swanson Correctional Center for Youth), was supervising juvenile offenders in a dormitory on September 17, 1977, when he was stabbed by four offenders in a stairwell.

Officer Brent Miller, Louisiana State Penitentiary, died April 17, 1972, when he was surrounded by four inmates in a dormitory at Main Prison and stabbed.

Captain John R. Singleton, Louisiana State Penitentiary, was shot twice and mortally wounded on September 10, 1933, when he twice refused the order of twelve inmates armed with smuggled guns to open the gate of Camp D.

Mr. J. W. Fletcher, Louisiana State Penitentiary, was shot on September 10, 1933, when he tried to disarm the ringleader of a group of twelve inmates trying to escape from Camp D.

After the memorial plaques were unveiled, each named employee was honored in turn and his family was presented a plaque commemorating his sacrifice and the memorial's dedication. There followed a 21-gun salute and Taps. After each family was presented a folded American flag, the ceremony ended as a single bagpiper playing *Amazing Grace* led families in a procession away from the memorial.

Construction of the Employee Memorial began with a memo from Secretary Stalder in 1999, in which he proposed to erect a permanent memorial as lasting tribute to Corrections Services employees who have given their lives in the line of duty. The Louisiana Association of Wardens (LAWS) volunteered to lead the project. Together, LAWS, the Probation and Parole Officers Association, and numerous Employee Activity Committees raised funds. Lester McCrory, a maintenance foreman from Elayn Hunt Correctional Center, oversaw the project. Supervised inmate crews from Elayn Hunt Correctional Center and Dixon Correctional Institute built and landscaped the memorial.

Before dedication ceremonies began, fifteen employees were honored for outstanding achievements and contributions during 2000. Master Sergeant Cheryl Butler, Louisiana Correctional Institute for Women, was named Correctional Officer of the Year. Probation and Parole Officer 3 Kenneth Chelette, Ville Platte District, was named Probation and Parole Officer of the Year. Food Services Director Helen Horton of Elayn Hunt Correctional Center was named Supervisor of the Year. Information Technology Applications Programmer Melanie Gueho, Information Services division, was named Support Employee of the year.

In addition, Secretary Stalder presented Distinguished Service Awards to Lt. Emanuel Ellis of Dixon Correctional Institute, Sgt. Penny Harrison of Louisiana State Penitentiary, Lt. Rawford Benson of David Wade Correctional Center, and posthumously to Capt. Herman Harris of C. Paul Phelps Correctional Center. The Distinguished Service Award is presented to employees who act courageously to protect life or property during a work-related emergency situation.

The Secretary's Award of Excellence was presented to seven employees for personal commitment and outstanding achievements. Recipients were carpenter foreman Lester McCrory of Elayn Hunt Correctional Center; Hospice Director Tanya Tillman, R.N.,

Major Johnny Dixon, Capt. Joe Norwood, and Dr. Anthony Tarver-all of Louisiana State Penitentiary; Facility Maintenance Manager Gary Shotwell of Dixon Correctional Institute; and Health Care Authority and Director of Nursing Debbie Schriber, R.N., of David Wade Correctional Center.